



STATE SENATOR • LIZ BRATER • 18TH DISTRICT

Brater Press Release

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
February 10, 2004

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DEMOCRATS OPPOSE REPUBLICAN VERSION OF POLLUTER FEE PROPOSAL

LANSING – In a strong statement from the Senate floor today, Sen. Liz Brater (D-Ann Arbor) staunchly defended her 'No' vote on SB252 (a bill she introduced early last year), stating that in its current form, the bill violates the original budget agreement negotiated last October. The bill was passed out of conference committee earlier today along strict party lines. The Senate approved the bill by a 21-17 vote.

“Let me make it very clear that I still firmly believe that costs for environmental monitoring should be paid, not from the General Fund, not by the taxpayers, but by those who are responsible for the polluting,” said Brater.

Sen. Brater and the rest of her Democratic colleagues voted no in response to House recommendations that the bill to charge fees to National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) permit holders include an exemption for specific farms totaling tens of thousands of dollars. This additional cost would be transferred to the City of Detroit. The House version would also remove the rule promulgation requirement from the DEQ, which threatens to put Michigan out of compliance with federal requirements. “DEQ Director Steve Chester has stated that this action could result in the program reverting to the EPA regional office Chicago,” indicated Brater.

This legislation was originally part of the FY 2003 budget compromise.

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During the conference committee debate, Sen. Brater and Rep. Steve Tobocman (D-Detroit) offered two amendments to the report that would have preserved the bill's original intent that polluters help pay the cost of clean-up by removing the House-proposed exemption for agriculture and restoring the rule promulgation authority of the DEQ.

The bill has been stalled in conference committee ever since the legislature was unable to resolve differences between House and Senate versions of the bill.

“All sides know that this was an agreement reached during last year's budget compromise, negotiated in the spirit of good faith and accountability,” said Senate Democratic Leader Bob Emerson (D-Flint). “Yet we're still haggling one year later, while a new budget crisis looms in the coming weeks.”

The NPDES was established by Congress in 1972 to monitor and discourage waste discharge into the nation's lakes and rivers. Michigan is one of only eight states nationwide that currently requires taxpayers to pay the costs of polluters who jeopardize state lakes, rivers and streams and the only Great Lakes State to do so.

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State Senator Liz Brater represents the 18th Senate District, which includes the cities of Ann Arbor and Ypsilanti as the Townships of: Ann Arbor, Augusta, Dexter, Freedom, Lima, Lyndon, Northfield, Salem, Scio, Sharon, Superior, Sylvan, Webster, and Ypsilanti. She serves as Minority Vice Chair of the Natural Resources & Environmental Affairs Committee and the Agriculture, Forestry & Tourism Committee. She also serves on the Finance Committee and the Judiciary Committee.